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Hamre, Schumann, Mueller & Larson, P.C.
P. O. Box 2902-0902
Minneapolis, MN 55402

EXAMINER

CAMPBELL, KELLY E

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3618

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-2,5-7,10,12-13,18-21 and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) in view of Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172) and Ito (US 4,721,178).

Gagnon et al teaches a four-wheeled vehicle comprising: a steering mechanism (100) having a bar handle;

a front part having right and left front wheels; a rear part having right and left rear wheels and the front and rear wheels defining a straight line at a level extending in a longitudinal direction through uppermost points of the front and rear wheels,

a four-wheeled vehicle according to claim 1, further comprising a power unit part (150) including an engine disposed below one of the driver's seat, said power unit part including a torque converter mechanism (T);

wherein said power unit part further includes a transmission mechanism (M) for transmitting an output from said torque converter mechanism (T) to said right and left rear wheels to drive said right and left rear wheels;

wherein the driver's seat lower portion (146) is disposed at substantially the same level as the straight line;

wherein said driver's seat (140) includes a front part having driver's footrests provided at opposite sides thereof see Figure 7-8, said driver's seat being formed to allow a driver to sit astride thereon with his feet rested on said footrests;

wherein said right front wheel and said right rear wheel provide a first straight line extending there through, said left front wheel and said left rear wheel provide a second straight line extending there through;

With regards to the use of the term "footrests", a footrest is defined as a support for the feet, per Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 10th edition, © 1993. Thus, any element "capable" of supporting a foot is designated a "footrest".

Gagnon et al does not teach a torque converter.

Inagaki et al teaches a four-wheeled vehicle further comprising a power unit part (P) including an engine (E) disposed below one of the driver's seat, said power unit part including a torque converter mechanism (T).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the ATV taught by Gagnon et al, to include a torque converter as taught by Inagaki et al to improve power transmission for the vehicle.

Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al does not teach a rear passenger seat facing forwardly and disposed behind the driver's seat.

Ito teaches a vehicle including a steering mechanism having a bar handle (G) with a driver's seat and backrest (3) disposed at said front part; and a rear passenger seat and backrest

(3d) disposed behind said driver's seat (3) above the rear wheels and positioned at the waist level of the driver sitting on the driver's seat, the rear passenger seat (6) facing forwardly;

a storage portion (67);

a footrest portion (7) provided on opposite sides of the drivers seat (3) allowing a driver to sit astride and rest his feet; further providing a rear portion of the for resting the rear passengers feet behind the drivers footrest, see Figure 2;

further including a front cover (5) and windshield (9), see Figures 1 and 3, and a body cover or leg shield, see Figure 1, disposed below the driver's seat (5),

wherein the driver's seat and the passenger seat have a member (central portion of support bar 20) disposed there between and cooperating with to provide a single seat (3,3D).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the four-wheeled vehicle taught by Inagaki et al to include a seat having a driver portion and a passenger portion to allow for a more comfortable ride for both users.

Claims 3-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) in view of Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172) in view of Ito (US 4,721,178) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Uphaus (US 5,984,356).

Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al modified by Ito teaches all aspects of the claimed invention, except upwardly projecting side edges.

Uphaus teaches a vehicle having a body (11) including foot rest positions, see Figure 1, and upwardly projecting side edges positioned within a region defined by straight lines between the front and rear left and right wheels.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the seats of the vehicle taught by Gagnon modified Inagaki et al and Ito, to include upwardly projecting side edges, to prevent the users or riders feet from slipping off the vehicle when riding.

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) in view of Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172) and Ito (US 4,721,178) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Winchell et al (US 4,437,535).

Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al modified by Ito teaches all aspects of the invention, except the rider and passenger seat being substantially at the same level.

Winchell et al teaches a vehicle having a seat 112 forward on the vehicle for receiving the driver and a seat (116) at substantially the same level as the driver's seat, for receiving a passenger.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the seats of the vehicle taught by Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al and Ito, such that the driver and passenger are at the same height, to allow the passenger to be in closer proximity to the rider and to more easily mimic the riders movements when maneuvering the vehicle to minimize the likelihood of tipping.

Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) modified by Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172) and Ito (US 4,721,178) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Rioux et al (US 6,296,073).

Inagaki et al modified by Ito teaches all aspects of the claimed invention, except the rear passenger seat having bulged portions.

Rioux et al teaches a seat 7, having a forward driver portion and rearward passenger portion, wherein the rearward portion has outwardly bulged portions at opposite sides thereof for providing a larger width than the driver's portion.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a passenger seat having a larger width than a driver's seat, in order to support a passenger of all sizes in addition to luggage or carrying items at the rear of the vehicle.

Claims 14-15, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) in view of Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172) and of Ito (US 4,721,178) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Mabie (4,466,660).

Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al and Ito teaches all aspects of the claimed invention as discussed above, except side support members united with backrest.

Mabie teaches a vehicle having first side support members (59) disposed opposite sides of the driver's seat (26), second side support members (57) disposed opposite sides of the passenger seat (27) and a backrest (28) disposed behind the drivers seat united with the first side support members (59).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the vehicle having backrest support for driver and passenger as taught by Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al modified and Ito, to include the backrest, side support assembly taught by Mabie in order to provide increased lumbar support to the rider and passenger.

Claims 22- 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gagnon et al (US 6,732,830) in view of Inagaki et al (US 6,712,172), Ito (US 4,721,178) and Mabie (4,466,660) as applied above, and further in view of Kurata (US 4,606,429).

Gagnon et al modified by Inagaki et al, Ito and Mabie teaches all aspects of the claimed invention as discussed above, except roll bar support.

Kurata teaches a roll bar protective device for protecting the riders of a vehicle, see Figure 1, including:

a wheeled vehicle, front roll bar (7) disposed in front of a drivers seat (14) in an upright position;

a rear roll bar (9) disposed behind the rear passenger seat (9), the rear portion being a passenger seat portion of the seat (5), wherein a driver and passenger are “Capable” of sitting within the space defined by a straight line extending through the -“vicinities” of the top ends thereof.

With regards to the limitation: “the front and rear roll bar provide a straight line extending through “ the vicinities” of top ends thereof, the straight line having a space defined there below to allow a driver and rear passenger to sit on the seat within the space”, the validity

of that limitation is dependent on the height/size of the user. A user of shorter height would more easily fit the description stated in the above limitation.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the vehicle including passenger seat with U-shaped bar frames supporting the back rests taught by Gagnon modified by Inagaki et al, Ito and Mabie, to include a roll bar protective system for shielding the rider during an accident resulting in tipping of the vehicle, as taught by Kurata.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-24 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event,

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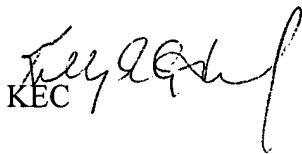
however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Kelly E. Campbell whose telephone number is (571) 272-6693.

The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00-5:30 Monday-Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Chris Ellis can be reached on (571) 272-6914. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


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